

# **Lowell Tobacco Control Report**

## **October of 2020**

**Prepared by: Cesar Pungirum, M.M., J.D.**  
**Program Director**

### **Lowell**

#### **Inspections**

I've completed 31 in-store inspections this month, so far. As usual, most violations found were related to the new signs required under the new state law. I still find an occasional flavored tobacco product. But none of these violations appear to be deliberate. They were all corrected before I left the premises.

#### **Pricing Surveys**

The Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program (MTCP) is creating a smaller sample of establishments that could be surveyed. It is also developing a shorter form to ensure that the time spent in store is not increased significantly. However, surveys are still optional during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Implementation of the new state law: An Act Modernizing Tobacco Control**

I've been working with some distributors and representatives from JUUL to ensure they make the flavor and nicotine content certification documents more readily available to retailers. JUUL had issued a letter last year indicating the nicotine content of some of their vaping products could exceed 35mg/ml, which would be a violation of the law. In June they issued a new letter stating the nicotine content of their products, but were silent as to whether any corrective measures had been implemented to ensure nicotine levels were in compliance with the law. They have since provided an email confirming that the nicotine content of their products don't exceed 35mg/ml.

#### **Compliance Checks**

MTCP is still working on developing new COVID-19 protocols for conducting compliance checks. These activities, as well as inspections and pricing surveys, are currently not required. Some tobacco control programs, this one included, have resumed inspections to some degree. I expect to resume compliance checks as soon as these protocols have been finalized.

#### **Tobacco Control Grant Renewal**

We have finally received a signed contract from MTCP confirming the renewal of our tobacco grant.

#### **Leading With Race**

About two to three years ago, MTCP began to explore how race/racism might be an important factor in the creation of health disparities among different groups. Since then, it has been conducting or sponsoring trainings on the issue of racism. I attended a virtual one on October 22<sup>nd</sup>.